Agreement on Agriculture spells doom for India's self-sufficiency in food production and food security. The Agreement on Agriculture permits unrestricted support to the agriculture sector for general research, pest and disease control inspection, extension, training and advisory services, marketing and promotion services, infrastructural facilities, public stockholding for food security purposes, domestic food aid, payments for relief from natural disasters, payments under environmental programmes and payments under regional programmes for producers in disadvantaged regions.

Developing countries are also permitted to provide domestic support which is measured in terms of Aggregate Measurement of Support, upto 10% of the value of their total agricultural production. Any domestic support given to the low-income or resource poor farmers in developing countries is permitted to be excluded from the Aggregate Measurement of Support. The domestic support extended to the agriculture sector through the current policies for the welfare of farmers in India including the minimum price support mechanism and provision of agricultural inputs at reasonable prices is also well within the. permissible limits under the Agreement. Further, the import of agricultural items can be suitably regulated by imposing appropriate tariffs, within the bound levels.

In the context of the forthcoming negotiations on Agreement on Agriculture in the WTO, India has been successfully highlighting the concerns of food security and rural employment in large agrarian developing economies.

Protection of Public Interest under Patents Ordinance

1134. DR. MAHESH CHANDRA SHARMA- Will the MINISTER OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY be pleased to

(a) the safeguards provided in ordinance regarding patents to protect public interest and involvement of the domestic industry on such claims which would be admitted by Government;

(b) whether it is possible for Government to create another source of manufacture within the country in public interest;

(c) if so, under which provision of the ordinance;

(d) whether it is possible for Government to fix prices of imported products covered by EMR; and

(e) if not, how the fair prices would be determined?

THE MINISTER OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY (SHRI MURASOLI MARAN): (a) The Patents (Amendment) Act, 1999 which replaced the Patents (Amendment) Ordinance, 1999 contains provisions for protection of public interest and national security. These are in the form of compulsory licensing of exclusive marketing rights (EMRs), exercise of right by government, either on its own or through any authorised person, fixation of price, etc.

(b) and (c) Section 24 (B) of the said Act, provides that EMR confers exclusive right to sell or distribute the substance covered by EMR but does not include right to manufacture. Authority to sell or distribute the said article or substance can be given by the Central Government in public interest under Section 24 (D).

(d) and (e) Section 24(D) empowers the Central Government to fix the price of article or substance covered by EMR.

Route of Trans Asian Railways and Asian Highway

1135. DR. ARUN KUMAR SARMA: Will the MINISTER OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY be pleased to state:

(a) whether ESCAP has finalised the route of Trans Asian Railway and Asian Highway network;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) if not, the present status of the project;

(d) the details of schemes finalised by Government to extend-infrastructural facilities in the NER including road connectivity to the neighbouring countries for promotion of border trade; and

(e) the details of such existing and proposed schemes including total outdays and commission target?

THE MINISTER OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY (SHRI MURASOLI MARAN): (a) to (c) Under the aegis of Asian Land Transport Infrastructure Development (ALTID) project, the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) has in an Expert Group Meeting at Dhaka from 25—28 May, 1999,